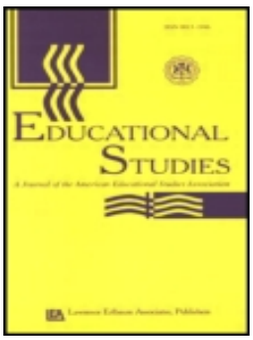

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Race, Reason and Reasonableness: Toward an "Unreasonable" Pedagogy

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Starting from the contemporary critical-theoretical notion of an *objective violence* that organizes social reality in capitalism, including processes of systemic racism, as well as from phenomenological inquiries into processes of race and identity, this article explores the relationship between racism and reasonableness in education and society. The category of the reasonable connects the content of particular propositions with the inner truth of the form of thought. At the same time, the reasonable refers to what can be legitimated not only intellectually but practically and morally. I describe how the force of this category, working through neoliberal modalities of appropriation and penality, is an anchor for persistent processes of racial oppression in educational policy and curriculum. Furthermore, if the reasonable is a central figure for ideology, then a kind of thinking that would break with it will show up in the first instance as unreasonable. Thus, I argue that critical pedagogy in the present needs to start from a different and "unreasonable" reason. In addition, taking its cue from interventions by radical educators and students, critical teaching needs to challenge the dominative decorum that forces dialogue on race and racism into the narrow spaces—both material and discursive—of the given.

What is thinkable in relation to society is indicated and bounded by a sense of what is reasonable. The category of the reasonable connects the content of particular propositions with the inner truth of the form of thought. What is mistaken is merely wrong, but what is unreasonable is contrary to thinking itself. At the same time, the reasonable refers to the sphere of practical norms: in contrast to the notion of the rational, what is reasonable refers to what can be legitimated not only intellectually, but practically and morally. The reasonable ties what can be properly thought to what is accepted; it identifies coherence with the norm itself. In this way, the imperative to be reasonable ties thinking and doing to the familiar maps and channels of social life. This is crucially the case for practices and understandings constructed by race and racism. This coherence with the given is the actual content of the virtue of reasonableness, even if this quality seems to us to glimmer with some inner light.

If the notion of the reasonable is a central figure for ideology, then a kind of thinking that would break with it must necessarily be unreasonable. If to make sense is to accord with what is, then a kind of imagination that seeks to think past the given will show up in the first instance not just as unexpected but even as irresponsible. However, this does not mean that the critical imagination is

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in fact irrational. As I describe, we can in fact argue from a different reason. Thus, this article, a theoretical project, seeks to uncover the meaning of an "unreasonable" pedagogy, which I argue is the form that critical pedagogy must take in this context and against the background of the violence that organizes capitalism and whiteness, and it will point to moments of interruption of this violence that indicate not just the limits of consensus but the openings of possibility.

Starting from the critical-theoretical notion of a hidden *objective violence* that organizes social reality in capitalism, including processes of systemic racism (Balibar, 2002; Žižek, 2008), as well as from a phenomenological inquiry into the condition of invisibility that has often structured experiences for people of color (Alcoff, 2006; Fanon, 1963, 1967; Gordon, 1997a; Yancy, 2005), this article explores the relationship between racism and reasonableness in education and society. After laying out the theoretical framework for my investigation, I consider the contemporary ideological structure of key aspects of educational policy and curriculum; I argue that the meaning and force of the reasonable, working through neoliberal modalities of appropriation and penality, is a central anchor for persistent processes of racial oppression in these contexts. Following this, the article outlines starting points for thinking and teaching in the present that would be oriented against the ideological encirclement I have described. I argue that to work through the difficult gaps and aporias that splinter the given, critical pedagogy needs to start from a different reason. Furthermore, taking its cue from interventions by radical educators and students, critical teaching needs to be unafraid to challenge the violent decorum that forces dialogue on race and racism into the narrow and oppressive spaces—both material and discursive—of the reasonable.

There has been much recent investigation into the relationship between notions of race and notions of reason. Critics have argued that Western epistemology has undertaken a conquest of other knowledges, setting itself up as co-equal with the truth, and as sole standard and paragon (Mignolo, 2011; Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007). Science is in this way underwritten by Whiteness, and race has to be seen as linking through subterranean passages the domains of the corporeal, epistemological, and political (Mills, 1997). In education, as many have demonstrated, the question of reason is also inextricably tied to the question of race. Scholars have described the way that racism structures the epistemology that undergirds pedagogy and curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2002), education policy and research (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2007; Scheurich & Young, 1997), and mainstream understandings of cultural difference between students (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Although this study relates to these investigations, it is important to note that it sets out in a somewhat different direction: My concern here is less with rationality per se than with what might be thought of as its social surface—*the reasonable*. If conceptions of rationality set down the forms of inquiry that are compatible with the pursuit of truth, the notion of reasonableness indicates the kinds of disposition, habitus, and action that are made legitimate in the flow of social practice. As I describe, racism is at work here no less than in the sphere of rationality proper, and sometimes with even more pernicious effects.

RACISM AND THE ORDER OF THE REASONABLE

Capitalism, Objective Violence, and Race

We are familiar in progressive approaches to education with the notion of structural violence, which is embodied in institutions, laws, and social structures that persistently advantage some and

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disadvantage others. This phenomenon has been explored most comprehensively in education in terms of the process of social reproduction (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; McLaren, 1989). Analyses of this process have shown how the educational system participates in the maintenance of inequities in terms of class, race, and gender, and masks this participation through the ideology of meritocracy. Against this ideology and other elements of hegemonic common sense, critical analyses have sought to lay bare the unfairness and oppression that characterize dominant forms of schooling and to point to more liberatory possibilities (Apple, 2004; Banks, 1995; Darder, 1991).

However, recent work in critical theory and philosophy should push us to deepen these familiar emphases in the contemporary context. In particular, the notion of *objective violence* names a principle that is more profound than simple structural oppression. Objective violence refers to the very logic of the social that grounds the institutions and systems within and with which we interact (Balibar, 2002; Žižek, 2008), as well as the sensible history that is constructed retrospectively from this standpoint. Objective violence names the "inexorable 'abstract,' spectral logic of capital that determines what goes on in social reality" (Žižek, 2008, p. 13)—the texture of domination that organizes social life across diverse registers of experience. Thus, objective violence appears not just in the systematic biases that proliferate across society, nor simply in the need to preserve the privileges and common senses of elites, but also in the organization of language and social practice—that is, in the *underlying order of the reasonable*. For this reason, objective violence can show up just as much in seemingly progressive efforts to remediate structural inequities as in the inequities themselves.

From this perspective, domination is tied to the *real abstractions* that ground the very sense and order of society. Against a simple critique that would reduce the complex order of contemporary society to the actions of powerful groups behind the scenes, Slavoj Žižek (2008) argues that it is precisely the solipsistic and speculative movement of the system that for the most part, determines our fates: "It is the self-propelling metaphysical dance of capital that runs the show, that provides the key to real-life developments and catastrophes" (p. 12). It is in this sense that the misery endured by those who are ground down or tossed away in this system is an objective process—in following directly from the abstract dialectics of the capital system. The mad oscillations of the stock market, for instance, are not simply the sum of individual investors' decisions; in fact the market organizes the possibility and meaningfulness of their actions in the first place, while also profoundly effecting society as a whole, including those thrown to the margins.

Žižek (2008) describes the way in which this objective violence is ideologically redoubled in the humanitarian efforts of philanthropists who seek to use the very wealth produced by domination and exploitation to counter the latter's effects—through international aid efforts and reform projects. A host of private foundations now seek to rival the power of governments and international institutions in the shaping of responses to social ills and crises worldwide. What might appear from one perspective as deeply irrational (depending on the system to remedy the injuries that it is responsible for producing, and which it must continue to produce as a condition of its existence) becomes eminently reasonable within this ideological universe. In fact, the unaccountable organization of global reform projects emanating from private foundations comes to stand for the form of reason itself, against which the state and its efforts appear inflexible and old-fashioned. This is, of course, very much the case in the educational sector, in which private philanthropists portray their reform efforts as progressive, against a backward and bureaucratic

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system of public school governance. In this way, the very destabilizing force of this market-based reorganization of public education works as evidence of its virtuousness.

Building from Žižek's (2008) analysis, we can thus identify several central ideological determinations of the reasonable: (a) The reasonable is the ideological form in which the actual irrationality of the system is sanctified. Rather than defending its violence through the mode of justification, capitalism in this way makes its fundamental logic, in fact, *unquestionable*. (b) In addition, through the moral shading attached to all that is understood as reasonable, the system's objective violence acquires a *positive virtue*. (c) In elite philanthropic efforts aimed at softening the hard edges of exploitation and marginalization, the reasonable *limits of social change* are staked out: reform as amelioration or remediation rather than transformation.

However, not only do the systemic inequalities and oppression associated with the neoliberal system of global governance have generally disastrous effects for the majority (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007); in addition, they have a crucial racial articulation. In this connection, Étienne Balibar explains that objective violence differs from structural violence in the degree and meaning of its cruelty:

> With the totally non-functional elimination of millions of disposable people—an elimination which, none the less, figures in precise terms in the planning schedules of the world-economy—. . . we have in fact passed beyond this limit of structural violence. In other words, we have entered a world of the banality of objective cruelty which goes beyond any mere reproduction of structures. (2002, pp. 24–25)

Balibar describes this disposability of whole populations, which exceeds the functional requirements of social reproduction, in terms of an "ultra-objective" violence. We can think in the first instance here of the forcing of large sectors globally outside the supports of the formal economy and social provision and into a semi-permanent state of unemployment. In addition, illegalization, incarceration, and marginalization are also key processes here (De Genova, 2002; Wacquant, 2009). A racial logic that specifies degrees of dispensability, and which disproportionally affects nondominant populations, organizes all of these processes. Indeed, Balibar argues that this ultra-objective violence has a kind of corollary in proliferating instances of racist ultra-subjective violence, such as ethnic cleansing. As I show in the second section of this article, understanding racism in terms of objective violence, and objective violence as racially organized, is helpful in making sense of the abandonment of students and communities of color by the education system, because the system's cruelty in this regard exceeds the familiar requirements of social reproduction.

The perverse reason of late capitalism in crisis in this way seeks to render its ubiquitous violence intelligible through the very racism of its articulation. Capital rationalizes its abandonment of large sectors of the global population on the basis of race, which works as a kind of marker of the boundaries of social inclusion. This way, in spite of widespread recognition that the system is not fair, racial disproportionalities in rates of imprisonment, deportation, etc., are nevertheless normalized in the very consistency of their racism. As Michelle Alexander (2010) describes, "It is simply taken for granted that, in cities like Baltimore and Chicago, the vast majority of young black men are currently under the control of the criminal justice system" (p. 176). As she shows, it is not only the hardening of criminal justice that has been normalized, but also its racially disproportional effects. Race-based inequities in sentencing are understood as a problem

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of administration, rather than as raising fundamental civil or human rights issues. In fact, the racial order of these systems of marginalization works as a perverse proof, in its very predictability, of a certain social order (if not justice). The reasonable works ideologically against this backdrop. This process is aided by the determined race-neutrality of neoliberal discourse, which persistently masks actually deepening racial divisions (Goldberg, 2009).

Building from Balibar (2002), then, we can add to our previous enumeration of the ideological determinations of the reasonable: (d) The reasonable refers to a *racial order of predictability*, specifying who will suffer and whose suffering will be compatible with the normal functioning of society. (e) The category of the reasonable works to conceal a specifically *racialized cruelty*, tied to the wholesale abandonment of marginalized populations in the era of neoliberal globalization.

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Phenomenology of Race and the Reasonable

The theorists previously considered provide important tools to understand the operation of objective violence and its expression in the order of the reasonable. However, by itself, this analysis is incomplete, especially if we are concerned with issues of race and racism. We can make crucial sense of the invisibility of objective violence from another angle as well—namely, from the perspective of a phenomenology of race and racism. This latter theoretical perspective contextualizes and historicizes the analysis, while also helping us to understand the complex dialectic between the objective and the subjective. In this context, we can see the reasonable at work not only in representations of broad social structures, but also in the meanings that are produced through local experiences and interactions between racialized subjects.

Charles Mills (1997) argues that capitalist modernity is organized on the basis of a racial contract that identifies reason with Whiteness. In the racial and racist order of reason, what then stands out is the color of unreason. Blackness and Brownness come to stand for an epistemological deformity or incompleteness. However, as I previously indicated, in centering the notion of the reasonable my primary concern is not with epistemology per se. If racism at the level of epistemology dictates the forms, kinds, and purposes of knowledge that will be sanctioned, the racism that lives in the heart of the reasonable works to render illegitimate the thoughts, utterances, and actions of people of color in the midst of everyday encounters and activities. Reason as *reasonableness* adheres not just to abstract forms of thought but to actual bodies and minds, caught in the concrete of the social. In short, the category of the reasonable points beyond epistemology to the phenomenology of race, and the work of scholars who have explored this terrain becomes particularly important (Alcoff, 2006; Fanon, 1963, 1967; Gordon, 1997a, Yancy, 2005).

The phenomenology of race is thus a second crucial angle from which to understand the identification of the reasonable with racism in capitalist modernity. From this perspective, it is essential to understand the possibilities of identity as anchored in the interpretive horizons given by the lived experience of bodies. As Lewis Gordon puts it:

> A stark evasion manifests itself in the face of the Black body. The Black body lives in an antiblack world as a form of absence of human presence. . . . The Black body is confronted by the situation of its absence. A binary world is imposed upon it which functions as a constant source of evasion. Like

> Dostoyevsky's Underground Man, who exists in spite of logic, the Black body finds itself existing in spite of reason. (1997a, pp. 72–73)

The order of social life, organized as it is on the basis of this horizon, valorizes judgments, rules and mores precisely by these racial evasions, and thus operates on the basis of a reason and reasonableness that are characterized by systematic absences. Here, then, we have a second explanation for the invisibility of the racially articulated violence of capitalism. If Blackness is lived as absence, then even systematic injuries to it are likewise effaced, as they are absorbed into the gap that engulfs their targets.

Consciousness, from this perspective, and the raced and gendered subjectivities connected to it, are anchored in bodily perceptions, habits and postures, as Linda Alcoff (2006) describes. Reason more broadly, and reasonableness in particular (as the embodied and dispositional moment of reason), are therefore deeply tied to lived experiences and identities and the differences that traverse them: "Social identities may be relational, then, as well as contextually variable, but they remain fundamental to one's experience of the world and to the development of one's capacities" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 92). However, the order of Whiteness implies the hegemony of one specific interpretive horizon—against which those that differ must appear in the first instance as transgressions or distortions. This ordering of differences of identity allows us to see how race is made available as an axis along which the objective violence of society can work. A phenomenological analysis also shows that in the case of racism, this objective violence always eventually becomes subjective, as it is lived in an everyday confrontation between differently raced bodies. For people of color, although racism may not in every case be visible, it is nevertheless not, on the whole, obscure or hidden. And even its systemic character is ultimately proven in an intimate assault on persons, as Frantz Fanon (1963) describes in the context of colonial encounters.

This double determination of racist state violence (simultaneously objective and subjective) is evident in cases of police brutality. The violence of the police against communities of color enacts a concrete aggression of bodies against bodies; it would appear in the first instance to be perfectly visible. What makes this violence disappear from view—for Whites—is not so much its retroactive justification, but rather an a priori understanding of police violence as expected—as long as this violence is directed at people of color (Staples, 2011). The system not only excuses, but even requires this violence: The authorities admonish us that the police must defend themselves against perceived threats. Of course, the racial register of this logic is evident not only in the initial police misconduct but also in the violent responses of the police to complaints or protests by people of color about harassment.[1] Here we can see that the objectivity of police violence becomes subjective and intimate precisely through its racial articulation. It is clear that what is at issue are structures of comportment, dispositions toward authority, and the supposed virtue or lack of virtue of arguments in this context.

In this way, transgressions at the level of the *reasonable* refer to an embodied and enacted virtue, a deference to authority that comes to be encoded in the habitus of subjects. Transgressions of this habitus are calculated on the basis of race, such that the comportment of people of color is more deeply controlled and surveilled, and variances in it are more likely to be construed as unreasonable. Beyond the abstract and inexorable systemic violence that Žižek (2008) emphasizes, a phenomenological analysis exposes the continuous injuries that the racial order of the reasonable visits upon people of color within the intimacy of everyday interactions.

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EDUCATION AND THE ORDER OF THE REASONABLE

The clear racial asymmetry in the responses of authorities to transgressions of the social order needs to be underlined. The fact that the order of the reasonable is a racial one means that people of color are, to begin with, already indicted by it. Although White people can also be punished for challenges to power, they are not at the outset excluded from the circle of legitimacy simply for being who they are (Mills, 1997). This observation should give us pause in thinking about the situation of learning, because it then becomes clear that even seemingly progressive educational efforts aimed at the production of dialogue must confront this complex racial topography, and the ubiquitous force of Whiteness (Matias, 2013; Urrieta, 2006). In this broad context, the racial order of reasonableness takes its specific shape. In the educational domain, this order unfolds across both policy and curriculum; its disparate instances are united in their repetition of a material and symbolic violence that is anchored ideologically, as I describe in the following.

"Ultra-Objective" Violence: Neoliberal Policy as Abandonment and Appropriation

Public schooling for students of color has increasingly come to be characterized by a punitive turn that broadly replaces a socialization of students for the workplace (differentiated, of course, by race and class) with a process of containment and criminalization (Duncan, 2000; Giroux, 2003). Scholars have noted the hardening of school disciplinary procedures, the articulation of these procedures with law enforcement apparatuses outside the school, the synthesis of behavioral and academic remediation processes under the rubric of accountability, and the "militarization" of pedagogy (Lipman, 2004; Nolan, 2009). However, as students of color confront continuous and disproportional rates of suspension and expulsion, along with other forms of punishment, and as teaching itself increasingly begins to take on a penal character, one needs to ask whether this coarsening of conditions expresses not merely a turn to punishment or containment but, in fact, a slow process of abandonment.

The ultra-objective violence that Balibar (2002) sees in the broad exclusion of more and more people globally from participation in the economy and social life is expressed in both the disintegration of the infrastructure of schools that serve communities of color, as well as in the *push-out* problem, in which administrators overtly (through expulsion) or tacitly (through demoralization) encourage students to leave school. We confront in this process something more than the familiar violence that is implicit in the socialization of students. In the barring of young people even from the process of social incorporation, there is an excessive element, an "intrinsic relationship between violence and *cruelty*" (Balibar, 2002, p. 136, my emphasis). That is, the current regime is characterized by an excess of injury and exclusion beyond that which is required in familiar processes of social reproduction (De Lissovoy, 2013). Furthermore, these very processes serve as the occasion for top-down reform. If global capital appears increasingly indifferent to conditions on the ground for regular people, so too do elites within the sphere of education leverage very significant philanthropic resources to pursue pet projects of school choice and charterization, attentive to the decay of educational experiences for students only insofar as it serves to justify these reforms (Scott, 2009; Slater, 2015). This is the educational aspect of what Žižek (2008) describes in relation to globalization as "SOS violence" (p. 9), in which the agents of the system's collapse return to save it with the same reasons and remedies that caused the crisis in the first place.

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At the same time that schools often abandon the students of color they ostensibly serve, their parents and communities are being driven from the city by a neoliberal urbanism that seeks to remake the urban core in the interest of White elites (Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009). Education is both an index and an instrument of this process of gentrification, as elites shutter community schools and offer new boutique selective schools as attractions to potential homebuyers (Lipman, 2011). The violent displacement of communities is recast as *revitalization* and the affluent households that take their place are portrayed as not merely acting in their own self-interest, but also as bringing stability and a forward-looking attitude to stagnant neighborhoods—illuminating these neighborhoods, we might say, with the light of reasonableness. Recalling Gordon's phenomenology of race, communities of color show up for the White revitalizers as blank spaces, dark sectors in the urban landscape. If "Blackness . . . function[s] as the breakdown of reason, which situates Black existence, ultimately, in a seemingly nonrational category" (Gordon, 1997b, p. 5), then elites frame the recolonization of these spaces by the White middle class, within the logic of neoliberalism, as a blow against material and moral disintegration.

In this way, the *reasonable* as an ideological formation in education does not simply distort a more authentic reason, but rather serves as a technology of colonization. It is not simply that elites operate according to a rationality that privileges their own class-racial interests, but rather that the violation of communities of color becomes the *positive content* of good sense in White politics and policy, according to the Manichean logic of colonial society outlined by Fanon (1963). It may be that the familiar critique of *deficit thinking* (Weiner, 2006) fails to capture the depth at which ontologies of race pathologize communities in education and elsewhere, as widespread protests against top-down reforms by the very students and families that these reforms ostensibly aim to serve only count for White elites as evidence of the dysfunction of the "disadvantaged." Activists for equity in education who seek to intervene in official policy-making circles need to realize that they confront not only political headwinds, but also a form of rationality that depends on the abjection of the poor, Black, and Brown as the condition of its own dubious virtue.

Neoliberal educational policy presses the aspects of the reasonable that I described at the outset to an even starker point. In the annexations of space and the reinvention of communities that these policies undertake, the impulse toward abandonment emphasized by Balibar (2002) is identified with the ameliorative impulse analyzed by Žižek (2008). In other words, rather than softening the blow of systemic inequality and marginalization, elite reform efforts (choice schemes, redevelopment, and charterization) end up repackaging and accelerating these processes. The ideological work of the reasonable is essential here, retelling the fragmentation and exclusion of communities of color as a triumph made possible by White ingenuity and generosity, and at the same time constructing interrogations of this narrative as unreasonable and inadmissable.

The Logic of Curriculum: "Documents of Barbarism"

Overt and hidden curricula are continuous under the regime of the reasonable. The notion of the reasonable highlights the internal link in ideology between reason (as expressed in the official curriculum) and virtue (as transmitted in the hidden curriculum). If schools see no tension between their obsession with rules of behavior and their academic mission, this is because an essential concern with propriety governs both spheres. This is especially the case in the current regime of

accountability. This regime, and the cascade of assessments that it produces, collapses knowledge into a *correctness* that crowds out deeper forms of learning and that mirrors schools' insistence on proper adherence to behavioral rules (McNeil, 2000). The racial construction of reasonableness works across these spheres to prepare students of color to be cited for transgressions by teachers, administrators, and the tests themselves. Just as students increasingly confront a curriculum of tests and of preparation for tests, so too they face a pedagogy of surveillance—as they are monitored and rewarded or penalized at different points throughout the day for their behavior. This is what Foucault (1995) called the "infra-penality" (p. 178) of the disciplinary society—but now multiplied in urban schools to apply continuously across the time of education. Understanding the racial-ideological field of the reasonable as underlying the space of schooling can help us in this way to understand the obsession with correctness in terms of both thinking and doing that is characteristic of education under neoliberal accountability.

Meanwhile, the fantasy of an escape from the grim anxiety that grips the curriculum of the regular public school motivates a trend toward specialized magnets, charters, and private schools (Saltman, 2012). These schools put forward visions that would seem to stand in stark contrast to the procedural learning that dominates the public system. However, at another level these two trends—on one hand toward a reorganization of learning by surveillance and punishment, and on the other hand toward exclusive spaces of authentic learning and creativity—go together. Thus, the appeal of the boutique school is precisely the way its brand stands out from the backdrop of the undifferentiated mass. At the same time, the competition presented by these proliferating alternatives justifies the vise that accountability tightens on the regular school. The protected and exclusive education that characterizes alternative schools constructs authentic imagination as a privileged escape from the regular.[2] But at the level of ideology we can see that this escape remains integrated within the system. As a gated enclave of authenticity within an alienated landscape, the imagination that contemporary boutique progressivism mobilizes is the counterpart to the violence that organizes schooling and capitalist society as a whole—a dynamic that Žižek (2008) describes more generally with regard to elite liberalism.

Finally, we need to consider how objective violence, and the notion of the reasonable that corresponds to it, work through our basic orientation to curricular knowledge, even as the canon is increasingly interrogated. Walter Benjamin (1968) argues that the "cultural treasures" that are passed down to us through education have a source that should scandalize us. They owe their existence, he writes, "not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 256). He identifies here the unspeakable truth hidden not just behind the narratives and accomplishments that we usually valorize, but even in the very presuppositions of our celebration of them. In this way, Benjamin's analysis of the violence underlying historical "reality" anticipates that of Žižek (2008) and Balibar (2002). History and the standards that codify it for the classroom remain bitterly contested in education (Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012). But in addition, beyond a progressive indictment of the distortions of the official curriculum, which seeks to bring to light overlooked injustices and unremarked accomplishments, a critical-theoretical analysis points to the scandal involved in our basic conception of history as a succession of slow steps forward. Thus, even progressive (and critical) accounts of US history and society often do not confront the original and decisive determination of this history by the racist drive to plunder and genocide, and the lack of respect for the sovereignty of indigenous peoples (Grande, 2004).

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This account suggests that a properly critical standpoint sees history as a record of violation and erasure, from which the privileged flee to the comfort of a faith in progress. Familiar multiculturalist approaches to history teaching seek to set the record straight and to incorporate the lost voices within our story of the past. But perhaps the lost voices and events can only appear within a different story and rationality altogether—which is to say that they can only appear to a radically different present. This means a difficult task for critical educators. How do curriculum and pedagogy proceed, if to teach critically means to undertake a radical break from historical memory and its cultural treasures, rather than simply to rearticulate them?

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TOWARD AN "UNREASONABLE" PEDAGOGY

The processes and structures I have described cohere not just in a dominant perspective, but in the very architecture of our shared social reality. This means that theory and praxis that would challenge these processes must work at a fundamental level. Against the decided world of the reasonable, an unreasonable pedagogy would write possibility as a breach in the given, and reveal behind the given the hidden and disavowed reason of racism and domination. Unreasonable pedagogy steps out of the permissible argument into what was not supposed to be susceptible to articulation. It investigates an invisible terrain, exposing the force that lies behind virtue and the inhuman logic that is presented as simple fact. To do so it must start, as I describe in the following, from a different reason and a different thinking.

Unreasonable Reason

The issue one confronts in the problematic of the reasonable is that the structure of the wisdom that is pointed to in this notion belongs fully to the given. In the context of coloniality, as Fanon (1963) describes, rightness of thought and action belong as properties to the colonizer, against which the dissolution of the colonized is counterposed: "The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed... No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous" (pp. 38–39). The pathologization of the colonized masks the systemic violence of the colonial system itself. Likewise, Žižek's (2008) critique of contemporary "liberal communists" (p. 18; global corporate philanthropists) argues that in contemporary capitalism official virtue *is* violence, to the extent that its good works function ultimately to sanitize and sustain the system. This means that in the first instance what is required, in thinking, is a leap from the putatively right and proper to the territory of the unsanctioned. Challenging power involves a certain recklessness (from the point of view of the given) that pushes outside the acceptable categories for thought and action.

A kind of thinking directed against and beyond Whiteness must, in this way, be unreasonable. To think against Whiteness means to think from invisibility, as Ralph Ellison (1947/1995) showed. The idiosyncratic nature of Ellison's voice and style are not distortions; on the contrary, they express the unprecedented structure of a reason that is competent to trace the meaning of racism itself. In this way, cast out from the sphere of the symbolic and the recognizable, Black and Brown

become a kind of gap in the world (Gordon, 1997a). More than the relationship of two elements of a duality, the relationship of non-White identities to Whiteness is that of the impossible Real to the familiar reality—a reality whose integrity is secured by the disavowal of the trauma that in fact determines it. In other words, this is not only a matter of certain racialized bodies standing out as marked against the (White) background of the "generalized other" (p. 118) as Alcoff (2006) describes. Rather, the bodies of people of color come to allude traumatically to the very impossibility of Whiteness itself—and thus, to the violence that necessarily sustains it. A critical racial reasoning needs to grasp the economy of Whiteness as an ordering of the world rather than a simple distortion or imbalance.

The distinction between the reasonable and reason itself is important here, because even if critical thought is characterized by a certain rashness from the point of view of the given, that does not mean that it is without reason altogether. Reason is the capacity for thought, which is not exhausted by power; the reasonable, on the other hand, aims as a category to reduce reason to what is proper. There can and must be a kind of thinking that extends beyond the boundaries of propriety. In this way, praxis against power is not just an unthinking resistance, but rather the expression of a reason against the given. We need to be able to find our bearings and to exercise our intelligence in relation to a terrain that power casts into shadow. To do this is to operate a larger intelligence, an *unreasonable reason* that calculates beyond the compulsory equations. Put another way, politics should challenge the dominion not just of this or that set of values, but rather of the very "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2010, p. 36) that is the world for us. This is not a project simply of escape or refusal but rather of recomposition—a cracking open of the given to create the ground of other possible worlds.

Power exists not as a tangible force from which ideology seeks to distract us in the name of protecting the powerful, but rather as the invisible skeleton of reality itself, a structure that is defined by its invisibility. Thus, Benjamin (1968) describes the historical past as plunged into oblivion by power, and as waiting to be recovered in each of its moments by the messianic moment of the present. In this way, capitalism does not just cover the moments of the Real with a false veneer but, instead, seeks to erase them entirely. This means that critical reason must work among the traces of a vanished, rather than a simply hidden world. In this project its method and truth cannot be supplied by familiar procedures. If objective violence is the matrix that structures the coherence of representations, then critical reason can only approach this violence elliptically, calculating backwards from its gaps and aporias.

The notion of the *unreasonable* as I outline it here is not at all incompatible with reason, but the reason that it starts from is different from the familiar one. The unreasonable reason that should be the ground of critical pedagogy refuses, heretically, to abandon the past to history. Instead, it remembers every injury implicitly and knows the possibility of the redemption of these injuries in the present. It calculates from the gaps and blank places, the nonrecords of the traumas that are the actual scaffold of Whiteness and capitalism (Gordon, 1997a). This is not least the case in relation to the unremarked traumas of everyday training that punctuate the time of school and give it its recognizable rhythm. For instance, it can be argued that back-to-basics and discipline-oriented charters, in their militant behaviorism, assimilate a kind of continuous injury of students into the very texture of instruction. *Reading the world*, as Paulo Freire (1996) described it, means developing an inverted or demythologizing perspective on these experiences—a vision that can turn the system's upside-down principles right-side up, and so make legible their obscure logic.

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Critical Teaching and Objective Indignation

Critical imagination refuses to accept alienation and violation as proper and normal. Critical pedagogy in the present must be audaciously committed in this way. However, my appeal to the *unreasonable* here is not the same as a rush into an unthinking or emotional response. After all, power is familiar with and reckons on such responses. And it may be that the very pedagogies we generally elaborate from this indignation are allowed as a kind of compensation—an "intensification of communicative access and opportunity" (Dean, 2009, p. 22). Thus, if there is no escape from exploitation and oppression, at least we can register our opposition in the safe space of the classroom. The increasing adoption of "social justice" discourse by mainstream teacher education institutions is evidence of this dynamic. This term is now ubiquitous in the mission statements for such programs, and yet this official commitment is apparently not incompatible with the neoliberalization of colleges of education, which continues without interruption. As in Žižek's (2008) description of the structure of ideology, the official critique of injustice here is precisely the condition and compensation for the reproduction of the system in practice. By contrast, I argue here for a sense of the *unreasonable* that is not reactive, but rather refers to a veering from the pathways of familiar responses toward a more closely considered praxis. After all, the idea that we might build an effective movement against the system is the idea that power seeks most urgently to render ridiculous in our imaginations. If the reasonable names the determined limits of thinkable reform, a project that would think past them will seem, in the first instance, to violate the rules of reason itself. Thus, efforts to concretize the broad social justice missions of colleges of education mentioned previously toward explicit antiracist or anticapitalist commitments are generally represented by administrators as impractical or intemperate.

The shift that I am proposing here could also be thought of as a move from mere anger at inequality to a more productive collective *fury* against racism and domination. Critical pedagogy might work, in this context, to refine our indignation, and to convert it into a positive political project. If Whiteness and capitalism elude our grasp in the very objectivity of their violence, similarly, anger might become historically effective in being lifted from itself into a collective and "objective" project. For instance, liberal policymakers have usually sought simply to soften the hard edge of contemporary xenophobia against immigrants in the United States. By contrast, critical educators like those associated with Tucson's Raza Studies program have worked to supply students, through a dialogical pedagogy, with the cultural and intellectual resources necessary to collectively confront and transform the colonial system that *underlies* antiimmigrant initiatives (Serna, 2013). Critical pedagogy, at its best, raises the subjective alienation of students to the level of ethical commitment and transforms it into a potent determination against domination. This commitment exposes the apparent virtue and decorum of the reasonable as in fact racialized imposition and injury.

To do this, we need to explicitly confront the forms of objective violence. Although an oblique reference to racism is generally permitted to teachers, a sustained exploration of Whiteness is still out of bounds. The hegemonic liberalism of the school casts this kind of exploration as gratuitous and excessive. Thus, in the aftermath of the shooting of Mike Brown and the subsequent protests in Ferguson, Missouri, the mainstream media featured educators there and elsewhere discussing how to consider issues of racial inequality with students. However, when Marilyn Zuniga, a

teacher in Orange, New Jersey, allowed her students to write get-well cards to ailing political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal as an important African American civil rights leader, she was fired. Critical pedagogy needs to center a consideration of race (Jennings & Lynn, 2005), and refuse the ruse of liberalism. The air of superiority that liberalism imagines for itself comes precisely from its simultaneous condemnation of both old-fashioned overt racism and what it considers to be a hyper-sensitive political correctness that sees racism everywhere; this position disguises its own racism as race-neutrality (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). An unreasonable pedagogy refuses these prohibitions.

Pedagogy of Unruly Spaces

The critical pedagogy proposed here is not just a challenge to the official consensus and common sense; rather, it is a praxis that emerges from beyond the limits of the officially intelligible, from unruly social and discursive spaces. In this way, the very location of critique—in terms of identity, venue and territory—already interrogates the order of the reasonable. The "situation of absence" (Gordon, 1997a, p. 73) that often characterizes the experience of identity for communities of color in this way becomes the site of insurgency, as do urban spaces themselves as they are resignified in the course of popular mobilizations. Schools in this context are both contested spaces and crucial stakes in this struggle over meanings.

Social media and the Internet are an important new terrain in this struggle. Cyberspace has, to some degree, created an occasion for radical educators and scholars to attain an unaccustomed visibility and to initiate new forms of public pedagogy. This does not mean that cyberspace is not subject to racial logics operating elsewhere, but rather that its relative openness, and the new assemblages it makes possible, create new possibilities for intervention (Sharma, 2013), while pointing more broadly to the political importance of alternative sites of critique. Through blogs and Twitter feeds, radical voices have challenged the limits of decorum on race-related conversation while also refusing the invisibility to which the White and mainstream debate seeks to relegate them. Naturally, these challenges have provoked strong responses—especially when these radical voices are those of scholars of color. (The most notorious recent cases are those of Steven Salaita and Saida Grundy, whose "intemperate" comments on racial politics led to pre-emptive dismissal and severe admonition respectively.) In this case, the relationship that Alcoff (2006) describes between differently raced and gendered subjects' lived experiences and their interpretive horizons reaches even into the virtual world. Although institutions have mostly distanced themselves from the specific online comments of controversial scholars while affirming their right to free speech, from a critical-pedagogical perspective these scholars should be applauded for their challenges to the ideological limits of discussions on race. This public pedagogy places voice and identity front and center in political debate in a way that points to the bio- and geo-politics of reason and the reasonable (Mignolo, 2011).

Youth are also initiators of forms of collective and popular pedagogy that refuse the given and reclaim public space. For instance, young people have been important participants in recent protests against police violence and harassment. This incipient uprising starts from an understanding of racial violence as systematic as opposed to sporadic. It also starts from an understanding of sites of vulnerability for power at the level of legitimation, because police brutality is one of the key sites in which the invisible objective violence of the system be-

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comes visible— and in which Balibar's (2002, p. 23) "ultra-objective" violence merges with its "ultra-subjective" supplement. Likewise, youth-led struggles to protect and extend ethnic studies programs have been both political and pedagogical projects situated within and outside educational institutions (Cabrera, Meza, Romera, & Rodriguez, 2013). In addition, student mobilizations against local school closures are concrete repudiations of the neoliberal reasoning that consigns the histories of communities to oblivion. For instance, recently in Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities young people have importantly participated in struggles to save public schools and school funding, even if the powerful have done their best to marginalize youth voices. In most cases, official venues for deliberation in education are already overwritten by the logic of conquest; mobilizations that aim to take back urban spaces propose a different terrain of discussion—the space of the *community* and the modality of *praxis*. These transgressions of the limits of the reasonable materialize a new democratic and street-level field of debate and dialogue.

With regard to the space of the school itself, proponents of deschooling argue, often quite compellingly, that the determination of compulsory education by logics of colonization and stultification argues for an exodus from the school and for the creation of autonomous educational projects (Illich, 1970; Lewis, 2012). However, this perspective overlooks the importance to communities of color of historic public schools and the struggles that are mounted to protect them. An alternative strategy would be the reverse: rather than arguing for a flight from schooling, a movement of repossession might disrupt and reorganize it starting from the needs and understandings of communities and educators. Glimmers of such a movement can be seen, for instance, in the occasional collective refusals of teachers across the United States to administer mandated standardized tests. Most famously, in 2013 teachers in Seattle refused to administer the district's Measures of Academic Progress test, making national news and provoking a crucial discussion on overtesting and the deskilling of teachers. Resistance means more than individuals skirting rules around the edges. The reasonable names the unity of virtue and violence in education, as I have described; to challenge the basic reason and reasonableness of schooling requires an organized and public denunciation—and a belief in the possibility that the space of teaching might be governed by different meanings and purposes.

CONCLUSION

In education and beyond, objective violence and its ideological recuperation transcend the opposition between public and private, uniting Whites in a determined epistemology of ignorance with regard to systemic racism and domination. The processes of top-down reform and reorganization reproduce the managerial logic that is the secret meaning of schooling. In this way, these reform efforts depend on the same grammar that produces the problems in the first place, although starting from a determined ignorance of their own conditions of possibility. Furthermore, the racialization of social domination in education and society is deeply tied to the structure of its reasonableness. In the first instance, the state constitutes safety and security by pathologizing and removing bodies of color—in particular, through the prison system. But beyond this, in terms of the ideology that organizes the experiences of students of color in schools and social life more generally, the racial disproportionality of social violence acts as a kind of proof of its legitimacy. Although social scientists raise the contradiction between this disproportionality and the ideal of

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social equality, for many Whites it could be said to prove the proper functioning of the education and criminal justice systems.

A critical antiracist teaching must be prepared to challenge this tautological regime of truth of racism and to enter into domains of theory and practice beyond the limits of the sanctioned and permitted—beyond the limits of the reasonable. Starting from a heterodox standpoint, distilling a collective and objective indignation against the objective violence of the system, and speaking from unprecedented and unruly spaces and occasions, this unreasonable pedagogy pushes beyond the familiar impulses of progressive education and toward a different distribution of the sensible. We think of the imagination as leaping beyond reality to the realms of fancy and illusion. But perhaps it is the other way around—perhaps the imagination steps out of the ideological fantasies that structure social life to arrive at a glimpse of the traumatic Real that, in fact motivates them. Thus, critical imagination must expose the underlying Whiteness in society that disguises itself as simple fact. Against the racial order of the reasonable, an unreasonable pedagogy shows that what has been offered to us as the last word is actually the wretched language of power. Looking past the order of the given, it indicates the possibility of a different being and learning.

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NOTES

1. This can be seen in the case of Eric Garner, who died in Staten Island in a chokehold administered by the New York Police Department. Even though Garner did not physically attack the officers, his refusal of the rules governing his conversation with them was considered sufficient warrant for the ensuing assault.
2. As the mission statement of one well-regarded private school in Texas puts it, "Our vision is to cultivate learning communities in which each and every student, parent, and staff member falls in love with learning, realizes their profound beauty, and lives with courage and authenticity" (http://www.khabele.org/home/about/mission).

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